

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: CO-CREATING THE YARD: A STUDY IN
DEFINING DIGNITY IN THE WORKPLACE
FOR LANDSCAPE LABOR

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Landscape Architecture, 2024

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Landscape architecture and landscape labor share a reciprocal relationship; one does not exist without the other. A landscape designer or architect produces a set of plants and a labor crew installs and maintains the work of the landscape designer or architect. This thesis project explores the definition of dignity as it pertains to landscape labor through participatory research methods: interviews, photovoice, vignettes, and co-design. The crew members of one landscape design/build and maintenance firm participated in the research. The research gathered informed the re-design of the Yard: the workspace where the landscape crew members report to work each morning and afternoon.

CO-CREATING THE YARD: A STUDY IN DEFINING DIGNITY IN THE
WORKPLACE FOR LANDSCAPE LABOR

by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my friends and colleagues in landscape labor – past, present, and future. I am so grateful for your friendship and the beautiful lessons you teach me. You make our gardens beautiful.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Landscape architecture and landscape labor share a unique, symbiotic relationship; one does not exist without the other. Landscape architects and designers produce two-dimensional plans, technical drawings, and models representing the proposed design. A labor crew makes these theoretical plans a reality by constructing, installing, and maintaining the space. They physically incorporate the design into the built environment.

Those willing to work with their hands and bodies in a construction setting can only actualize the work produced by a landscape designer or architect in an office setting. Despite the reciprocal relationship between the landscape architect and the landscape workers, the former receive accolades, awards, and recognition for their work, whereas the latter do not (“Terremoto New Client Syllabus”).

This thesis explores landscape labor as it pertains to landscape architecture. This thesis is a case study examining one landscape company and employs participatory research methods to understand the experience of a landscape worker. This research begins to define what dignity means for a landscape worker and informs a re-design of the landscape crew members' work site, thus enabling their empowerment.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Landscape workers - or crew members as I will refer to them in this paper - spend long hours working with their bodies in various weather conditions. By working with pesticides and fertilizers, they expose themselves to hazardous chemicals. By working

with heavy equipment and machinery, they risk injuring themselves on the job. In a reputable company, a landscape crew member will receive a fair wage, health insurance, worker's compensation, and other benefits. Even so, landscape crew members are overworked, underpaid, and largely ignored in the design process. Simply put, landscape architecture undervalues crew members.

1.3 Research Objectives

The questions I explored through this thesis process are:

What is the definition of dignity as it pertains to landscape labor? How can we use this definition to empower those who work in landscape labor in the decisions of their workplace?

Additionally, through this thesis, I will aim to explore and understand the daily experiences of landscape crew members. These findings will be important to landscape architects to better represent them in the field of landscape architecture.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Relevance

This study is important because the landscape crew members in this country are often immigrants - many of whom are undocumented or awaiting permanent citizenship - and therefore more vulnerable and not aware of, or able to advocate for, their rights as workers.

The National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) conducted a demographics study on landscape workers. The data collected from the NALP study on landscape labor demographics is more accurate than the U.S. Census data on the Civilian Labor Force, given their direct connection to landscape contractors. The NALP study states that of all the landscape workers in the United States, 61% identify as “Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin.” By contrast, the U.S. Census claims this number is only 18% (“2021 Workforce Demographic Study”). Given the high number of landscape workers who identify as Latino, this fuels the claim that the immigrant labor used to build our gardens is grossly underrepresented.

While the data claims that 61% of landscape workers identify as Latino, this percentage rises in some geographic areas, such as the Pacific West (i.e., California). For example, in the Pacific West, this percentage increases to 77% (“2021 Workforce Demographic Study”).

More scholarly research is needed on the topic of landscape labor. The following literature review identifies the few key recent journal articles and books highlighting the lives and experiences of landscape workers.

2.2 Maintenance

Landscape architecture education often neglects to discuss maintenance. However, maintenance is a crucial aspect of the longevity of landscape architecture and is crucial to the discussion of landscape labor. This gap reflects on the practice and the social awareness of landscape professionals.

In his book *Overgrown*, landscape architect Julian Raxworthy describes the 'identity crisis' landscape architects face when questioned about what they do professionally. He reveals that many landscape architects are insulted when others insinuate that they are "just a gardener" or a "landscaper" (Raxworthy 1). They feel the need to clarify and justify their professional work, detailing the "significant, more serious [projects] like environmental projects, open space systems, streets, and other infrastructure" (Raxworthy 1-4).

In the United States, landscape architects have long positioned themselves as 'white collar' working professionals and tried to distinguish themselves from the working-class, blue-collar professions. However, such 'blue-collar,' working-class crews are crucial to making the landscape architect's drafted plans a reality with the initial installment of a project and subsequent maintenance.

Landscape maintenance crews are essential to the ongoing care of a project after it has been installed, ensuring that it maintains its aesthetic and structural integrity and performs at optimal levels. Raxworthy describes the role of landscape gardeners as 'carrying out the vision' of the landscape architect, which often "frustrates landscape architects" due to the necessary changes to plant care and materials as time progresses (Raxworthy 1-28), thus highlighting a division between

landscape architects and labor crews. However, this "carrying out the vision" of the landscape architect is exactly why maintenance is crucial to landscape architecture.

2.3 Representation

Michelle Arevalos Franco elaborates more on the discussion of representation through her work as both a researcher and landscape architect. According to her definition, representation is to be "included, acknowledge[d], and visible within and by members of a community." Franco further defines that this representation can be through "advocacy, research and documentation, bureaucratic consideration, credited collaboration, informal socializing, and other acts of inclusion" (Franco, "Invisible Labor." 95-111). Franco claims that the exclusion of landscape labor from landscape architecture education – specifically the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB) standards – is partly culpable for the lack of awareness surrounding landscape labor within the landscape architecture profession.

Franco asserts that this professional distancing devalues labor. Additionally, Franco elaborates on the social hierarchy found within landscape architecture, where there is one-way communication from the designer or architect to the landscape worker (Franco "We are landscapers"). This positions the landscape architect as the expert with the landscape worker being subordinate. However, in Franco's research and observations, as well as my own, it is apparent that the landscape workers possess far more knowledge and skill than what is fairly credited.

The representation of landscape workers cannot be discussed fully without mentioning the treatment and value of labor, as they go hand-in-hand.

2.4 Treatment and Value

Designers, architects, *and* clients for who benefit from the work of crew members often underappreciate or undervalue the work being performed, which leads to unfair practices and treatments.

In her book on domestic labor, a research field adjacent to landscape labor, sociologist Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo describes the working lives of Latina women who work in and for the homes of wealthy Los Angeles residents. These women share similarities with landscape workers, such as working long hours, receiving little recognition for their work, having their work devalued, and often being misrepresented based on immigration status and other class factors. Hondagneu-Sotelo identifies the "social prices" of domestic labor as being "the loss of dignity, respect, and self-esteem; ...and the daily hardships of raising families on poverty-level wages" (Sotelo "Domestica"). These same social prices are often paid by the landscape workers as well, due to the aforementioned social hierarchies and devaluation of labor.

Hondagneu-Sotelo shares recommendations for restoring dignity and value within the domestic labor workforce. Of these recommendations, she advocates for "respect for ... rights and dignity as a person, a fair and dignified salary," a sufficient period for breaks and manageable work schedules, employee benefits such as social security benefits, paid time off, ... and lastly, "to be recognized as professionals by society" (Sotelo, "Domestica." 217).

Such recommendations are highly applicable to landscape workers and encompass the need for both representation and fair treatment.

Chapter 3: Overview of Project

3.1 The Site

This project studied the company where I have worked for the past six years. I wanted to learn what dignity meant for our landscape crew members and what improvements we could implement for their benefit and well-being.

The company is a residential design/build and maintenance firm and has been in practice for over 35 years. The company serves only high-end clients in the greater D.C. area. The office staff is limited to one boss, one office manager, and three to four designers. The company employs 30 - 45 landscape crew members annually.

The designers and office staff work in a downtown office while crew members report to work each morning at what we call: 'the Yard.' The Yard is located approximately 22 miles away from the downtown office in a rural setting in the Town of Poolesville, Maryland. It is a three-acre site that houses all of the supplies and equipment needed to build and maintain a garden.

3.2 The Crew Members

The company employs 30-45 crew members annually, who are assigned to either an installation crew or a maintenance crew. Some crew members are part of 'specialty' crews that perform tasks such as irrigation, rose care, and integrated pest management.

All but one of the crew members are men, most of whom are immigrants from Central America. At present, three of the crew members are non-Latinx employees, one of whom is the sole female employee who manages the greenhouse.

The company's three installation crews consist of one crew leader and two or three crew members. Installation crews are responsible for building new gardens or enhancing existing gardens under the direction of the landscape designer. The installation crews perform planting tasks, prepare garden beds, roll sod, grade earth, and build some masonry projects. They can spend as little as a few hours at a job site to more than a few weeks.

The company has four maintenance crews, each consists of one crew leader and two or three crew members. Each maintenance crew is responsible for the care of 25 to 40 gardens, which they visit six to eight times a month. The maintenance crews visit three to seven gardens in a daily, depending on the garden's size and complexity. They perform a variety of routine tasks such as weeding garden beds, pruning trees and shrubs, deadheading spent perennials, and mowing lawns. They must remember specific requests from the designers and clients as each garden has its own needs and unique aesthetic.

The vast majority of the Central American crew members must travel an average of 37 miles each morning from their homes to the Yard. Public transportation from the crew members' homes to the Yard is limited and inefficient. Many of the crew members live in the same neighborhoods and, therefore, commute to work in carpools. The company provides the carpool SUVs and designates carpool drivers. However, crew members must pay a fee, deducted from their paychecks, to use the carpools. They usually leave their homes around 5:00 or 5:30 in the morning to arrive at the Yard by 7:00 am.

They spend about an hour to an hour and a half at the Yard each morning gathering with their fellow crew members, loading up their trucks with supplies, and attending the occasional staff meeting.

By 8:30 in the morning, they leave, driving an average of 22 miles into town to get to their job sites. With rush hour traffic, this can take well over an hour.

The crew members wrap up their day at the job sites between 3:30 to 4:30 pm and head back to the Yard to clean up. They likely don't make it home until 7:00 in the evening.

This is a long day, particularly after working outside all day in an array of weather conditions.

Chapter 4: Research Methods: Interviews

4.1 Interviews

I used Interviews and participatory research methods to best understand the crew members and their experiences. Participation was key here: I wanted to hear the crew members' voices and learn about their experiences first-hand.

4.2 Interviews: Terremoto

The first interview I conducted was with Jenny Jones, with California-based landscape architecture firm Terremoto. Jones confirmed the divide between design work and landscape labor. She also iterated on the importance of garden maintenance in landscape architecture; proper care and maintenance work preserve a garden for years to come (Jones, Jenny. Personal interview. 30 Nov. 2022). Given that gardens and public spaces require continual maintenance, the subject of maintenance will never be separated from landscape architecture.

Terremoto unapologetically advocates for the fair treatment of the landscape workers with whom they contract. They educate their clients through a "Client Syllabus." This syllabus outlines Terremoto's stance on landscape labor (as well as environmental stewardship and land acknowledgment). By sharing this syllabus with their clients, Terremoto can clearly define their expectations and advocate for the fair treatment and compensation of crew members ("Terremoto New Client Syllabus." 2022).

The labor acknowledgment points to the value that crew members bring to landscape architecture - whether by installing new gardens or maintaining existing gardens - and therefore sets a precedent of respect for crew members.

4.3 Interviews: Yankee Clippers

In another interview, I spoke with Elizabeth Doyle, owner of Yankee Clippers, a pruning-only company based in Maryland. Yankee Clippers has found great success serving residential clients in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Doyle's attributes her employees' specialized job training to their great success rate with their clients (Doyle, Elizabeth. Personal interview. 26 May. 2023).

Doyle assigns new hires to crews with highly skilled crew leaders. The new hires start by doing simple jobs - gathering clippings and general cleanup - all while observing the others pruning. Through specific hands-on training and effective management, the new hires eventually learn expert ornamental pruning techniques (Doyle, Elizabeth. Personal interview. 26 May. 2023).

The skills that Doyle's employees possess and their maintenance work directly relate to the longevity and aesthetic of their clients' gardens. Their expert knowledge and professional service give their clients confidence in their work; in turn, the clients value the service being performed. Clients often greet Doyle's crews on site with coffee and snacks as a thank you for their work, acknowledging the effort they put forth in the gardens (Doyle, Elizabeth. Personal interview. 26 May. 2023).

4.4 Interviews: JR Simplot Company

Finally, I spoke with the human resources department at the JR Simplot Company. The JR Simplot Company is an internationally recognized agricultural company based in Boise, Idaho. They employ a wide range of talent, from business executives to laboratory researchers to farmhands. They are known for the excellent treatment of all of their employees, regardless of their role in the company. They are

committed to the well-being of their employees through equal opportunity, work safety, respect, and dignity (“Our Responsibilities”).

The JR Simplot company provides a wonderful precedent for landscape labor, considering the farm labor required for the researchers and business executives is akin to the landscape labor necessary for the designers and architects.

In the interview with the human resources department, I learned that many of the farm hands are migrants, traveling from Mexico to the U.S. each year by way of an H-2A visa. The farm hands perform tasks such as shoveling feed bunks and cleaning bedding in livestock feedlots. While these tasks may seem lowly or unimportant, the opposite is true: "Their job is extremely important and critical to [Simplot's] goals." (Griffin, Angie. Personal interview. 7 Mar. 2024).

This messaging is reiterated to the farmhands repeatedly: their job is important. The Simplot executives realize this and are acutely aware of the reciprocal relationship between the business and labor ends of the company. Recognition of the farmhands’ contributions creates a sense of gratitude within the Simplot community, which is always expressed to the farm workers (Griffin, Angie. Personal interview. 7 Mar. 2024).

Throughout the interview, I heard buzzwords such as "empowerment," "value," "respect," and "community" all within the context of the farm laborers. These words appeared so effortlessly in the conversation; it was evident that the JR Simplot Company practiced what they preached.

Often, the top executives at the JR Simplot Company will visit the farms and talk directly to the farm hands, asking them earnestly, "How are you?" The top

executives take an interest in the farm hands: they know their names and ask about their families (Griffin, Angie. Personal interview. 7 Mar. 2024).

The JR Simplot Company values its hourly workers as their most critical staff. This respect has created a work environment in which employees with an H-2A visa return to Simplot year after year; many have returned for 20 years or more and wish to bring their children to work as employees when they are old enough (Griffin, Angie. Personal interview. 7 Mar. 2024).

4.5 Interviews Summary

A common thread through these interviews is that knowledge and respect play an important role in defining dignity for a landscape worker. Knowledge empowers a landscape worker to work efficiently and independently, taking pride in one's work. This knowledge and skill are often recognized by colleagues and clients and reinforces the value the landscape worker brings to their craft.

Respect relates to job satisfaction and adds value to manual labor. It is showing gratitude for the labor performed and recognizing that design work in the office cannot be accomplished without labor work in the field. Respect directly correlates to a sense of community, or belonging. As exemplified by the JR Simplot Company, building community, or fostering a sense of belonging, empowers people who work in manual labor.

Chapter 5: Research Methods: Participatory

Three participatory methods were used to learn about the crew members' experiences at my case study site—photovoice, vignettes, and co-design.

5.1 Photovoice

Photovoice is a participatory method often used to transcend language barriers. Originally developed as a tool for research in the public health arena (Wang and Burris 369-87), photovoice is a research method in which participants use a camera to respond to a question or prompt by taking a photograph. Participants and researchers then discuss those photographs to understand why the participant might have chosen to photograph a certain scene or subject. Those photographs are then analyzed and coded to look for patterns and make conclusions about what the participants collectively communicate.

This project began with photovoice to explore the subject area, learn how crew members would respond to participatory research, and gather some initial feedback about their working conditions.

Five photovoice sessions were conducted with up to 30 crew members participating, resulting in the collection of 19 photographs. Crew members were given a camera at their job site and left with a prompt, "What is something you enjoy about your work?" Or, "What is something difficult about your day?" Crew members then elaborated on what they photographed and why.

The photovoice method was not very successful. A couple of crew members were engaged, but for the most part, it fell flat. It sparked little conversation; the presence of a camera seemed to intimidate crew members, and it overall seemed uncomfortable for everyone. Only three or four crew members reliably participated throughout all five sessions, and those who did participate, likely participated because they had a long-standing relationship with me and felt comfortable doing so.

All of the photographs taken by the crew members were of plants. Based on the discussion afterward, the crew members seemed to take pictures of the plants they either liked or could properly identify.

Despite the inconclusive results of the photovoice sessions, this highlighted themes of knowledge and pride in one's work. The crew members took photographs of plants that they could properly identify. These are of a select few plant species that the crew members are intimately familiar with and know how to care for. They know when these plants bloom and when or how to prune them.

The crew members also photographed plants that they enjoyed for aesthetic value. They admired the work they were capable of doing and the grand properties they cared for. They recognized that the aesthetics and health of the gardens they worked in resulted from their hard work.

5.2 Vignettes

Vignettes are a story-telling method that includes both written and pictorial elements to capture a moment or explain a short scenario. They can help tell someone's story or share their viewpoint in a less threatening way (Erfanian, 2134-45).

There is no standing precedent for what a vignette should look like for research in landscape architecture. Therefore, the vignettes documented answer the research questions through the experiences and stories of the crew members.

They comprise of 1) a brief written background of the event or person, 2) a brief written account of the event or person, 3) a brief conclusion that relates the

event to a central theme, 4) A visual image that represents the experience or event, and lastly 5) a conceptual base map diagramming the event taking place.

The visual components of these vignettes differentiate them from those used in other research disciplines and are what help create a precedent for vignettes in landscape architecture.

The best participation I got from the crew members was when I worked alongside them at their job sites. I spent about a year conversing with them and learning more about them and their experiences. Eleven vignettes emerged from these conversations and highlight the experiences of the crew members. All names have been changed to protect the identity of the crew member whose story is being told.

The Path

February 28, 2023



Figure 4 Miguel's stone path.

Source: Illustration by author

We started installing the Training Garden at the Yard. The purpose of this garden is to teach installation and maintenance techniques to crew members that are aligned with the company's high standards and aesthetics. It contains a sampling of plant and hardscaping materials commonly found in the clients' gardens.

The boss asked me to oversee and manage the garden's design, installation, and training workshops. He wanted to make sure we installed a stone path for hardscaping practice. I had to leave for meetings before the crew could build the path. I figured it would be a simple, straight path, like those in our clients' gardens. I left Miguel, who supervises the three installation crews, in charge (fig. 2); I trust him.

Later that afternoon when the path was finished, Miguel sent me some pictures of it in a text message. Rather than a straight path, as I had assumed, he designed and directed the crew members to install a curved path (fig. 1) with a round landing in the center. The path turned out to be better than I had imagined; so fun and playful. I never would have thought to do that.

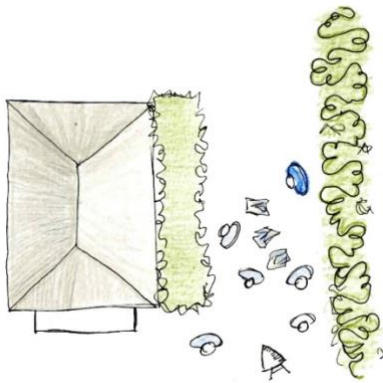


Figure 2 Miguel directs the crew in building the path.

Source: Illustration by author

Our plant buyer has been praising Miguel for years.

"You know who's a great designer?" he would ask me.

"Who?"

"Miguel. He's got a good eye. And he's a quick thinker."

Miguel is a great designer, and he does have a good eye. Yet he seldom - *never* - gets the opportunity to show it at work; "designer" isn't in his job description or training. Often the employees who aren't "designers" or work in the office get dismissed and are expected to do just what they are told and not to contribute anything more.

Spring Bulbs

March 30, 2023



Figure 3 A representation of the flowers Sammy planted.

Source: Illustration by author

The Yard has a square lawn in the center of the gravel parking area. The Boss wants to keep that space open, as it is, free of any objects.

A new garden bed has appeared around the tree at the north end of the square lawn. In it are planted an odd mix of hellebores, a hydrangea, a couple of heucheras (fig. 3), no doubt salvaged plants from a demolition job.

One gray morning in early spring, I notice an assortment of spring bulbs blooming in that new garden bed: purple *Muscari*, pink-red tulips, and a few yellow *Narcissus*. I bend down to take a closer look. Sammy sees me and waves his arms to flag my attention (fig.4). When I look up at him, he's smiling and points to himself saying, "That's me! I planted that!" He looks proud of his work. "It's so beautiful!" I reply. "I love it."

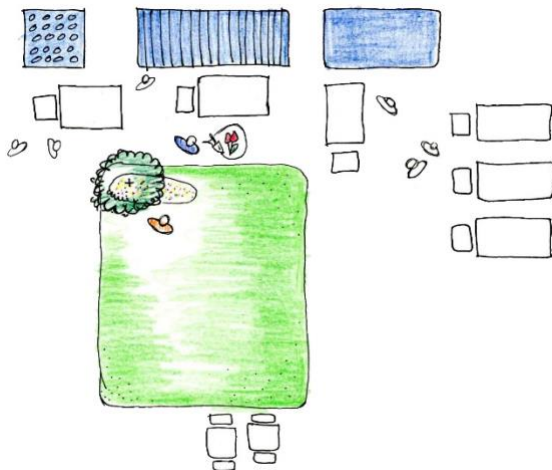


Figure 4 Sammy catches me admiring his plantings and tells me this was his doing.

Source: Illustration by author

Most crew members live in apartments without their own land so they cannot to do their own gardening. Instead of wasting plants that come back to the Yard, they often plant old or extra plants and bulbs at the Yard. The crew members demonstrate care for their workplace and by doing so, their workplace becomes an extension of them.

Yelling

June 5, 2023



Figure 5 Sammy planting flowers for a client.

Source: Illustration by author

Sammy is an installation crew leader. He is originally from El Salvador and has been working with the company for 30 years, about as long as the company has existed. Back then, the company offered to help employees with immigration visas. As a result, Sammy has made the U.S. his home and has raised his family here.

Sammy has had some health issues that make physical labor difficult. Years ago, he had a seizure while working. As he has aged, his crew is tasked with less strenuous projects, such as planting annual flowers, setting up holiday decorations, and light planting jobs.

Sammy is an excellent mentor and trainer; he has an authoritative presence and leads by example. He explains tasks to new hires. Because of his guidance, many of his junior crew members have advanced to become crew leaders.

I noticed these qualities in Sammy when I first started working at the company. He took the time to show me how best to plant the pots so as not to damage the root structure of the plants. Even though I was an experienced gardener, I saw his gesture as well-intended, and let him teach me. That willingness to let him teach me led to trust in our working relationship.

Back in May, Sammy and I were planting flowers (fig. 5) for a client and were talking. I wanted to know what sorts of work experiences were challenging. Assuming some of the challenges might be weather-related I probed, “...*too hot outside? Sometimes it rains or gets cold?*” Every time I threw out a suggestion, he shrugged and said, “*Nah.*”

He then shared with me a recent experience (fig. 6) when one of the designers yelled at him while working together. He shared several experiences of the other designers yelling at him, too.

Unfortunately, this happens far too often. My office colleagues often yell at the crew members when on-site directing installations. My office colleagues feel pressured to get a job done on time or to installed just right, but that is no excuse for communicating so poorly. There is a cultural and professional divide between the designers at the office and the crew members on the job sites.

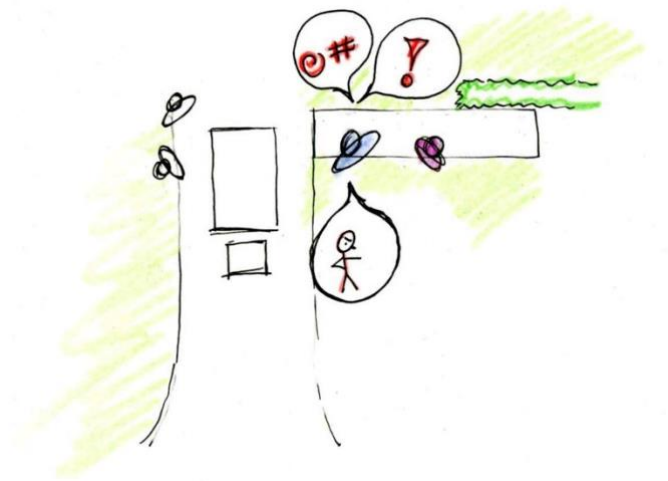


Figure 6 Sammy tells me what is difficult about his job; the yelling.

Source: Illustration by author

Costumbre

June 23, 2023



Figure 7: A map of Guatemala representing 'costumbre.'

Source: Illustration by author

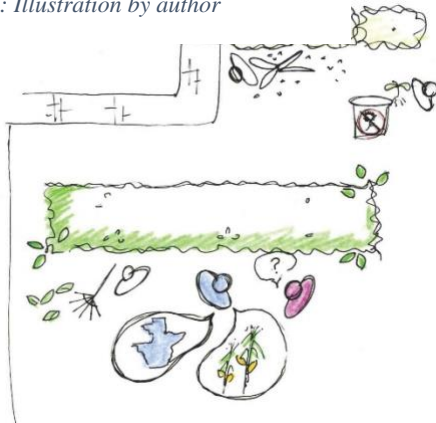


Figure 8: Sebastian tells me about his life in Guatemala.

Source: Illustration by author

Sebastian is another long-time employee of the company. He is quiet and shy and is self-conscious about speaking English, although he speaks much better than he thinks. He has a serious health condition that affects his kidneys, and so he is assigned to company roles where the physical labor is minimal. Currently, he manages all four of the maintenance crews and oversees the quality of their work.

I am pruning and weeding the gardens with the crew members, talking with them (fig. 8). Sebastian is working alongside me and I ask him, "...[y tu] te gusta esta trabajo (sic)?"

He responds to me in English with "yes."

"How so?" I ask.

"It is...you do it every day, at home in Guatemala. It's..." Sebastian is looking for the right word in English.

A crew member interjects, "costumbre."

"Yes, *costumbre*," Sebastian clarifies.

I learn that "*costumbre*" is something like routine; like you're accustomed to something, it is a habit.

I talk to Sebastian more about what he did that was "*costumbre*" and learn that he had a farm—or worked on one—back in Guatemala. He grew cauliflower, onions, corn, "everything," he says. He has been here in this area for over 20 years at this point, so this is his home now, this lifestyle and work is his normal, his *costumbre*.

Many of the crew members come from farm backgrounds in Guatemala (fig 7). I often hear stories from crew members about their experiences from home, whether it is comparing the summer cicadas or talking about chores or the farm animals they used to have. They have lost daily contact with their homes, but in some ways, they retain a bit of their culture through landscaping. The difference, however, is that through landscaping, they are working for someone else.

Parental Support

July 7, 2023



Figure 9: The greenhouse where Anna manages flowers.

Source: Illustration by author

Anna is a young woman who has worked for the company for four years. She organizes the greenhouse (fig 9) and helps manage annual flower orders (fig 10). Anna often accompanies crews to direct planting jobs when the designers are not able to visit the site. She didn't have any horticultural training prior to starting, but learned through hands-on experience.

Anna recently had a baby and has since reduced her hours from full-time to part-time since she relies on family to babysit her child while she works. During maternity leave, the company hired another young mother to take Anna's place. The replacement also had little to no experience working in horticulture. The company never trained her properly, got frustrated with her lack of experience despite not training her, and quickly terminated her from the position. However, she had potential to excel had she only been trained.

In summer, Anna and I were working together at a client's garden. I needed help tweaking a few flower arrangements and she was available to help me. She spoke openly about her return to work post-partum: the long hours she was expected to work despite setting limits with management, the poor treatment she received from her managers, and the low pay she was earning. She disclosed that after speaking with her short-lived replacement, she learned the replacement had been offered an hourly rate of \$0.25 more than Anna was currently earning.

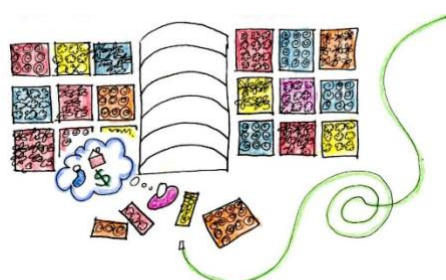


Figure 10: Anna watering and sorting her flowers.

Source: Illustration by author

Anna had previously tried to negotiate a higher pay rate upon returning to work; after all, she had worked for the company for four years without a raise, had acquired valuable skills, and was desperately needed by the company.

The boss would not accommodate Anna's request for a pay raise. Anna was upset that they had offered an untrained replacement a mere \$0.25 more per hour and yet wouldn't agree to pay Anna at least \$0.25 more per hour.

Anna felt that she was being taken advantage of. She needed to return to work to support her family was struggling to afford childcare. She was limited in what hours she could work because her childcare depended on which family member was consistently available to help.

Green Peppers

August 1, 2023



Figure 11 Green pepper grown by Charlie at the Yard.
Source: Illustration by author

Charlie started his career in horticulture at a retail garden center. He worked there for years before the garden center closed. After they closed, he came to work for the Company, and has been here for over 10 years as the integrated pest management technician.

He inspects our clients' gardens for insects and diseases and treats them as appropriate. His skill set is unique; it is hard to find someone who knows as

much about plants, insects, and diseases as he does. I often call him for planting suggestions for tricky microclimates.

I spent the morning at the Yard. I passed Charlie on my way in; he was sitting in his idle truck, about to head out (fig. 12).

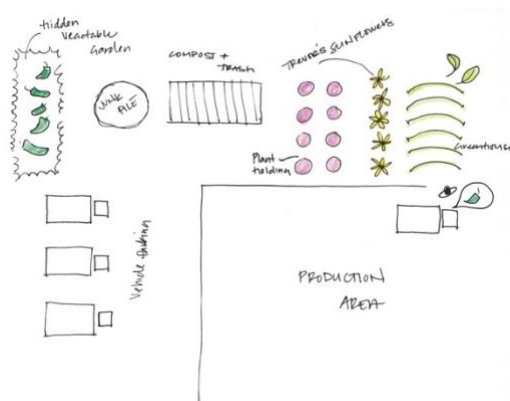


Figure 12 Charlie offering me peppers from the cab of his truck.

Source: Illustration by author

Charlie: "Hey! You like green peppers (fig 11)? I've got lots of them. Here I got 1, 2, 3... 5... 9. 9 peppers."

Katie: "Oh wow, you grew all those? Are these your sunflowers also?"

Charlie: "Yeah, those are my sunflowers."

Katie: "Do you garden at home?"

Charlie: "Nah, I live in an apartment. I used to."

Katie: "Would you like a garden if you had the chance - here at the Yard?"

Charlie: "Oh yeah, that'd be great. I'm growing stuff over there [gestures to a far corner]. I got watermelon, cantaloupe, zinnias. All sorts of stuff."

Charlie is not the only crew member who has gardened at the Yard; other crew members salvage leftover plants and plant them around the Yard. The crew members are creating their own sense of belonging when they take ownership of the Yard.

Bouquets

August 23, 2023



Figure 13 A colleague holds a bouquet of flowers picked from the Training Garden.
Source: Illustration by author

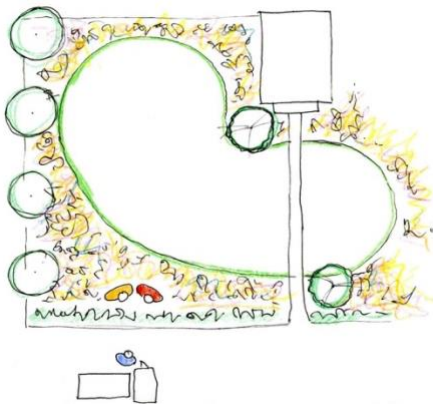


Figure 14 A colleague and I stop Adam on his way home to give him flowers for his wife.
Source: Illustration by author

The Training Garden has a wide variety of plants as diverse as all the Company's gardens. I often use the Training Garden as my own personal cutting garden and cut a bouquet of blooms to take home.

Late one afternoon, the office manager and I were at the Yard doing some paperwork with the crew members. After we finished and the crew members were heading home, we went to the Training Garden to pick some flowers (fig. 13). Adam had to stay behind, it was his turn to close up shop at the end of the day. As he was pulling out of the driveway, we flagged him down (fig 14).

"Hey! Do you want to take any of the flowers home to Anna?" we asked.

Adam looked a little embarrassed. *"Uh, sure, I guess. Can I?"*

"Of course! That's what it's here for!"

"Should I tell her you guys picked these?"

"No, don't say that! It was all your idea."

Adam thanked us and took the flowers we had picked home to his wife. The office manager and I felt comfortable cutting flowers to take

home, but Adam did not.

The crew members don't always feel comfortable at the Yard, or like they have any ownership over the shared spaces. Creating a space of belonging is important: a garden where they can help themselves to fresh cut flowers if they'd like.

Carpools

August 23, 2023



Figure 15 Crew members sit on old lounge furniture as they wait for their carpool groups.

Source: Illustration by author



Figure 16 Crew members gather by the Barn as they wait for their carpools at the end of the day.

Source: Illustration by author

The majority of the crew members live in the same neighborhoods, about an hour to hour-and-a-half drive from the yard. Many of them do not have their own vehicles to get to work. The company has provided the crew members with two SUVs to use for carpooling to and from work.

The crew members have saved old furniture from clients who want to throw it away in the dumpsters at the yard. They have arranged it near the open grassy lawn in the parking lot, near the Barn (fig 15).

Each crew returns to the yard at a slightly different time depending on how that day's work went. When crews arrive at the end of the workday, they unload the trucks and change back into their street clothes in the locker room inside of the Barn.

As they wait for the rest of the crew members (and carpool pods) to arrive, they sit in and gather around the old furniture (fig 16). They talk, laugh, tell stories, and play on their phones while waiting for their rides to gather.

The gathering space at the Yard is informal but crucial to the well-being of the employees. It is a place where they can relax for a moment after a long day's work and enjoy each other's company. Creating a more comfortable and intentional seating area for the crew members would be appreciated.

Cold & Rainy

November 10, 2023



Figure 17 Crew members huddle under the garage overhang while they wait for instructions.
Source: Illustration by author

Hugo has worked at the company for least ten years. He started out as a junior crew member working closely with Sammy and became crew leader for his own crew several years ago. His crew does quality work and is efficient with time. He is not one to complain; he has a positive outlook and simply does what he is told and tries so hard to do his job well.

I was scheduled to do a project with Hugo's crew in early November. When I got up and looked out of the window at 6 am, I could see that it was raining with no signs of stopping. The weather report did not call for clear weather. I called Miguel, Hugo's supervisor, to confirm that we were still working today. He said, "Yes."

I showed up at the job site. I was late because I thought for sure the boss would have called it a day and sent the crews home early. Hugo and his crew members were at the job site waiting for me, huddled underneath the gutter by the garage (fig 18).

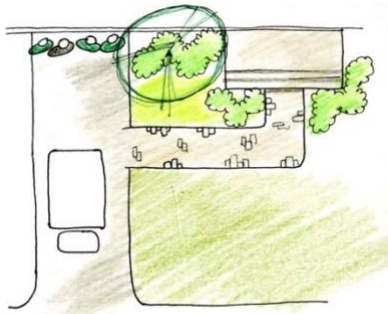


Figure 18 Crew members try to stay dry while they wait for further instruction.

Source: Illustration by author

"It's too cold and rainy to be working today!" I told them.

Hugo agreed, but with a smile asked me what I wanted to do at this property. We walked the garden together and I explained instructions. Still, I would not say I liked the idea of the crews working.

I called Miguel again to see if the boss had changed his mind about the crews working. He hadn't, but when I explained to Miguel that it was too rainy, cold, and probably too wet to be able to dig in the earth without making a complete mess, he agreed that it was better we send the crew home.

Our landscape crew members will often work in all sorts of uncomfortable conditions: in the cold, the rain, the hot and humid summers, days with strong winds... Our crew members show up every day regardless of the weather conditions (fig 17). They don't often feel like they can advocate for themselves and ask for a day off or another assignment. Whether or not they work in harsh conditions is the decision of the Boss. Since the Boss and the designers work in the office, they don't always realize how tough the outside conditions can be for the crew members.

The Penthouse

December 1, 2023



Figure 19 Planter ready to be situated on the balcony.

Source: Illustration by author

accepted. Antonio is young and didn't bring a lunch to work that day. I tried to make conversation with him on the drive downtown, but Antonio was too shy or embarrassed to talk back.

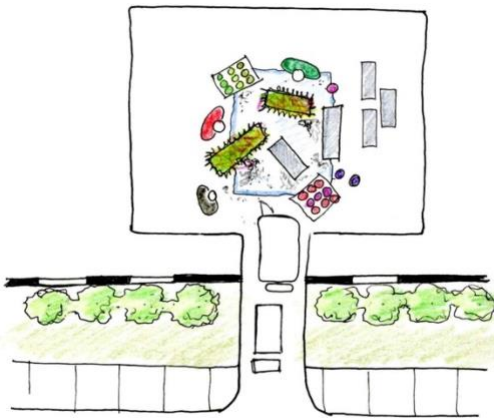


Figure 20 Crew assembles planters in the loading dock prior to bringing them up to the penthouse.

Source: Illustration by author

I had a special project downtown where I needed to set up some large planters (fig 19) for a client's new penthouse balcony. The project was small enough that I didn't need a full crew; we would not be able to fit a full-sized truck downtown, and we wouldn't four people's help.

Miguel, the crews' supervisor, arranged for Antonio, a junior crew member, to help me. I arrived at the Yard in the morning, and Miguel and Antonio helped me load up a van with the needed supplies. I drove the van downtown with Antonio as my passenger. I brought him tea and a cookie, which he sheepishly

Miguel met us at the penthouse loading docks with the planters in his truck. He suggested a clever way to install the planters: instead of bringing all the materials up to the penthouse balcony and making a mess up there with the soil, he suggested planting the planters down at the loading docks over a tarp (fig 20). After they were all planted and cleaned up, we loaded the planters onto a cart and brought them up through the elevator and into the penthouse.

Miguel's idea worked brilliantly. Not only did we make very little mess in the loading docks, but clean-up was easy and we were able to bring the newly assembled planters to the penthouse balcony seamlessly. The entire process took only a couple of hours. My colleagues had advised me to block off an entire workday to assemble the planters. They warned of the significant time it would take to install them and the horrible mess we'd have to clean up. When I mentioned this to Miguel as we were getting ready to leave, he expressed that it didn't have to be that difficult and that my other colleagues never listened to him and always made it harder on themselves. Miguel is a quick thinker and a problem solver, yet his expertise often goes ignored; the designers assume they know best.

Christmas Lights

December 2022

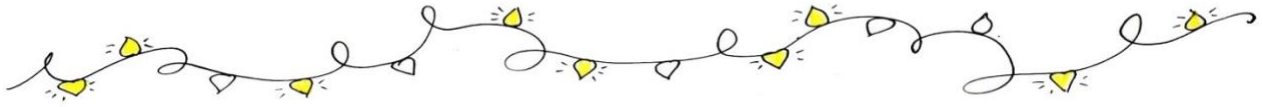


Figure 51 Christmas lights

The company installs Christmas lights (fig 21) and decorations for the clients each year after Thanksgiving. Each year, without being prompted by management, the crew members take faux wreaths and hang them on the front grills of all the company trucks (fig 24).

Source: Illustration by author

On a December visit to the yard, I noticed some crew members had strung up some old, partly working lights around the staircase in the barn (fig 22). Only about half of the lights were working.

“Who did that?” I asked Ron, our plant buyer who often supervises the yard.

“Oh, I don’t know. Some of the guys did that.”

“How fun!”

“Yeah, well, only about half of them are working.” (Ron is very grumpy in the mornings.)

Much like the salvaged furniture or plants found throughout the yard, the crew members attempted to make it feel like their space by stringing up some old Christmas lights. The crew members spend much of their day at work on job sites. The yard is where they begin and end their workday. They change from street clothes to work clothes and back to street clothes here. They socialize here, and for many, it has been a permanent fixture in their lives for many years.

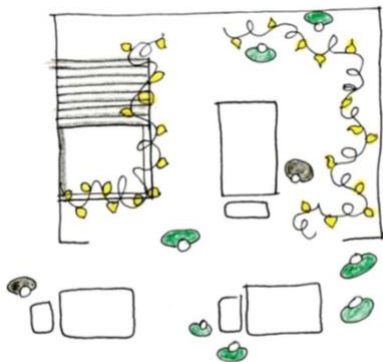


Figure 22 Crew members working

Source: Illustration by author

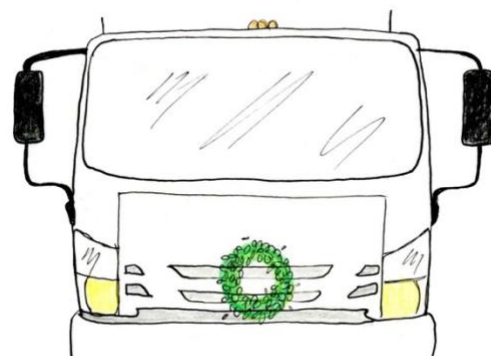


Figure 24 Truck with evergreen wreath

Source: Illustration by author

These vignettes were so personable and resulted in rich, meaningful stories. The conversations with the crew members left them feeling valued and heard. I must emphasize that I am so grateful for the crew members' trust and vulnerability in speaking so openly with me.

The vignettes identify three major themes: knowledge, respect, and belonging (fig 25). These themes are consistent with those extracted from the interviews and photovoice sessions and begin to define what dignity means for a landscape crew member.

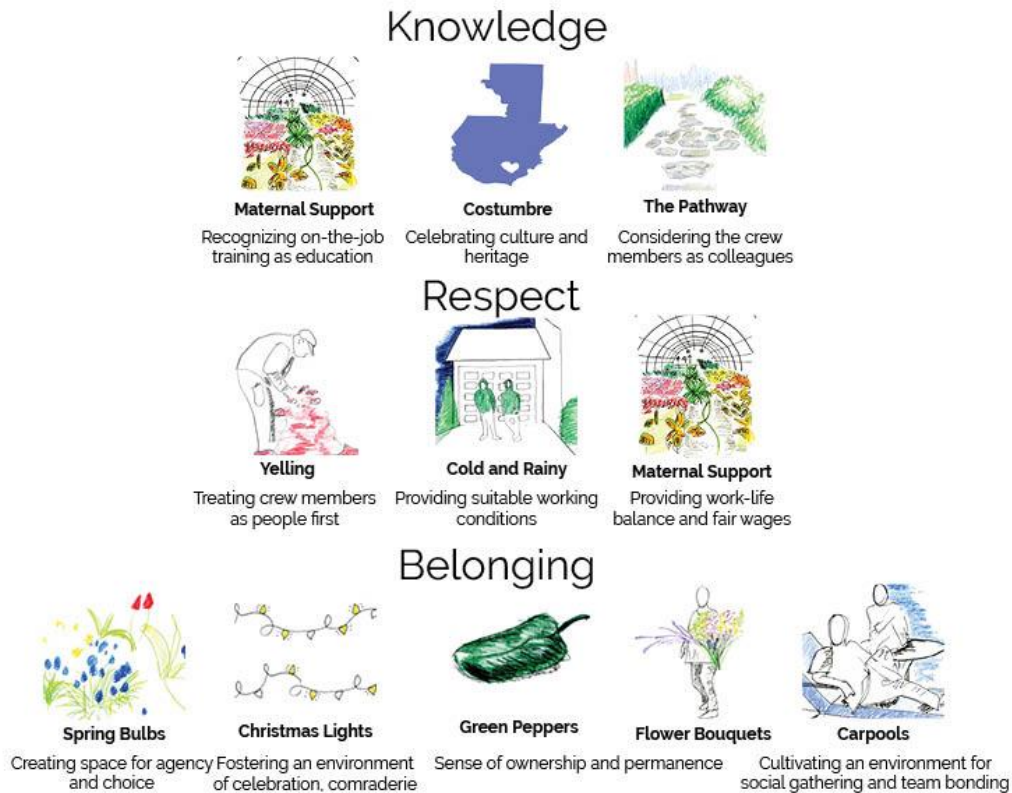


Figure 25 Diagram with all vignettes organized into the themes that define dignity.

Image Source: Illustration by author

5.3 Co-Design

Co-design is another highly participatory method in which participants play an active role in planning a project and their direct feedback is incorporated. Co-design, also referred to as co-creation or co-production, is a collaboration between field experts and community members (Fetzer 18-33).

Co-design has become increasingly popular in landscape and planning professions and can be implemented at any stage of the process, whether it is the initial planning phase or the implementation of a plan. The effects of co-design can be many, such as an increase in collaboration, public service, and knowledge (Lee227-40). Implementing co-design in planning and design projects allows for community members to be an active part of the decision-making process.

In this scenario the community members are the crew members, who use the Yard on a daily basis for work. Each crew member who participated in the co-design activity received a base map of the Yard (fig 26). The crew members were then free to annotate the base map however they pleased, whether through words, phrases, or pictures. We then took a walking tour of the Yard and stopped at key areas to discuss them.

Six crew leaders participated in the activity, which resulting in a rich discussion. The crew members openly discussed safety concerns that I ultimately wouldn't have noticed had I relied solely on my own observations. For example, the crew members requested that lights be installed throughout the Yard, particularly around the materials storage areas. The crew members often work at dawn and dusk and need lights to help them see better.

The participating crew leaders asked for a roof to cover the organic materials storage area, which is currently exposed. The organic materials storage area includes compost, leaf mulch, and soil. The crew leaders explained that when it rains, the rain gets soaked into the soft materials and makes it difficult to shovel and load into the trucks. The rain also washes away some of the material and some nutrients are leached, contributing to the stormwater problem on the site.

The crew leaders also discussed increasing the safety of the fuel pumps on site, preserving the lawn currently used as a soccer field, having a designated space to gather and socialize at the end of the day, and ample training opportunities to learn more about the plants they take care of.

The conversations and participation from the crew leaders during the co-design walkthrough were invaluable. The crew leaders' participation was a crucial part of this process; without this information, I would not have been able to perform such a thorough understanding of the Yard, its functions, and deficiencies.

Many of the themes derived from the co-design walkthrough were consistent with those themes derived from the vignettes: respect, knowledge, and belonging. The safety concerns the participating crew members highlighted are directly related to respect. The crew members do an important job for the company, and providing them with a safe environment to work in is an important way to show them that they matter and that their lives are valued.

The crew members mentioned wanting to add more depth to the current training garden and programs offered at the Yard. This relates to the emerging theme of knowledge. The more job-specific training or education the crew members have,

the more effectively they can perform their jobs. They are more confident in the work that they do and in their abilities to train and manage more junior employees. Having a better understanding of how to do the work improves performance and is therefore subject to positive affirmation from office colleagues or clients which directly relates to their feelings of accomplishment and empowerment.

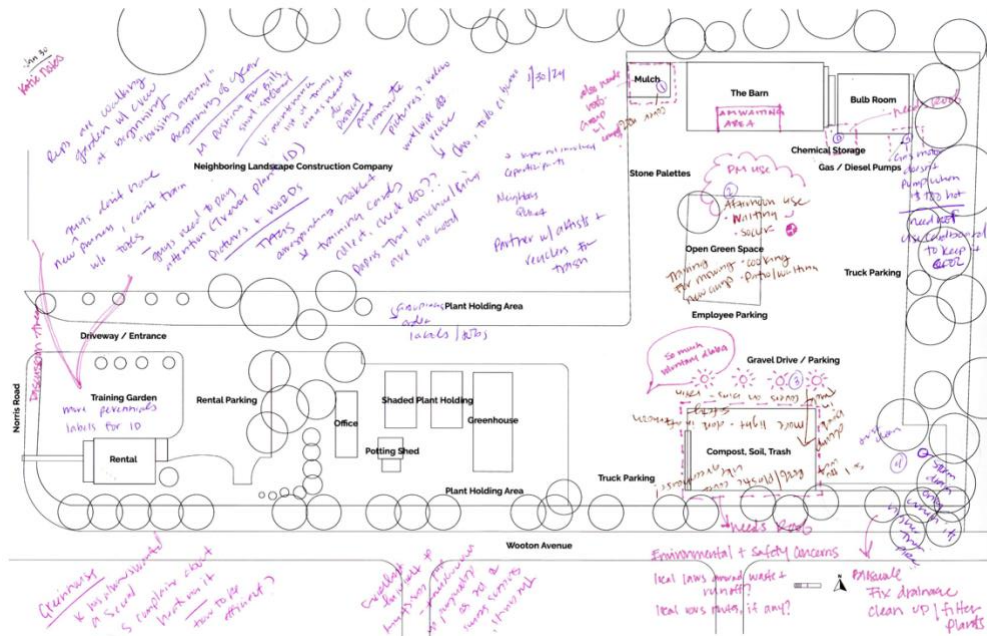


Figure 26 The base map of the Yard with notes from the co-design walkthrough

Source: Author's notes

Chapter 6: Site Inventory

6.1 Zoning and Land Use

The Town of Poolesville, where the Yard is located, is designated as rural (fig 27). Most of the Town is zoned as mainly rural-residential or low-density residential and is surrounded by agricultural fields (fig 28). The Town has limited commercial space, where the Yard is located. The Town has few resources and amenities and does not include a grocery store.

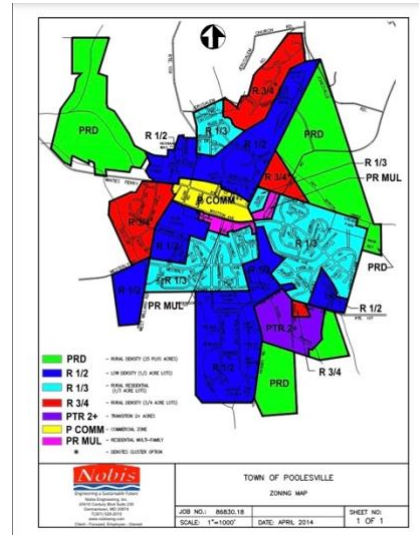


Figure 27 Map of Poolesville's Zoning

Source: "Town of Poolesville Zoning Map"

The median cost to buy a home here is

\$617,000 (with the majority of homes for sale reaching over \$1,000,000), which helps

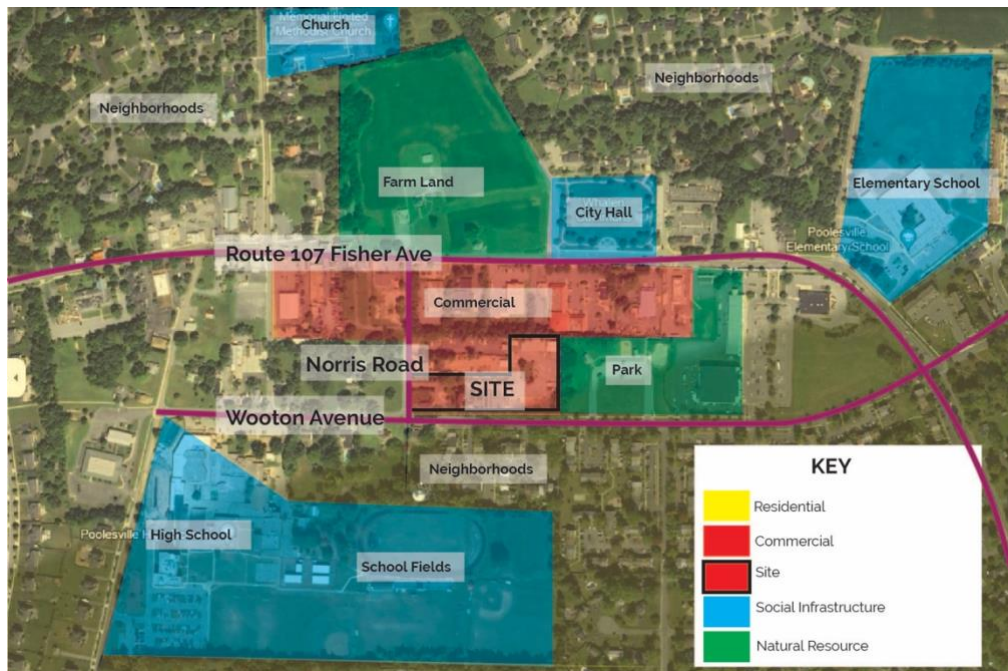


Figure 28 A map showing the context and zoning surrounding the site.

Source: Image produced by author

explain why the crew members, who make only \$33,000 - \$54,000 per year, live so far away.

The Yard is located at the edge of the commercial zone and borders both town parkland and residential neighborhoods. There are two public schools within a mile of the site.

6.2 Site Use

The Yard is a productive site that is used to store all the materials and equipment needed to build and maintain gardens (fig 29). Staff access the Yard is through its only entrance on Norris Road, at the site's western end.



Figure 29 Site use map diagramming the functional composition of the site.

Source: Image produced by author

Upon entering the Yard is a rental house, which the company rents to tenants for passive cash flow, which can be particularly helpful during the winter months when work is slow, and the company needs to make payroll. Surrounding the rental house is a training garden, which mimics the types of gardens the crew members install and maintain routinely. The purpose of this training garden is to provide hands-on experience to the crew members.

Following the long, narrow driveway entrance past the rental house and training garden is a plant holding area. Currently, there is a small trailer-office where

the plant buyer works. This whole area is designated for storing plants ready to be set aside for installation jobs. In this area is a modest greenhouse – more akin to a hoop house – that stores summer annuals and plants that need to be overwintered. This plant-holding area also houses a small, historic barn that has existed on the site well before the company occupied it.

Beyond the plant holding area, the driveway opens up to a large gravel pad. This area of the Yard has all of the parking of company and employee vehicles, hard and soft materials storage (stones, mulches, compost), and facilities. One of these facilities is "the barn" which includes the bathrooms, locker rooms, tool storage, and mechanic's station. Another building, "the bulb room," is another storage facility for tools, drainage pipes, planters, and seasonal bulbs.

In the center of this gravel pad is a small lawn area where the crew members play pick-up games of soccer after work as they wait for their carpools. They also use this space to train new hires how to properly mow grass.

The order of this space is chaotic, with materials situated in various locations around the Yard and fractured parking throughout the site.

6.3 Physical and Environmental

Given the productive nature of the Yard, not too many trees are planted on site. Therefore, the Yard is a mostly sunny area, with most of the shade occurring on the site's perimeter where the town trees are planted (fig 30). Shade cloths are placed

in the plant-holding areas to protect the new nursery plants from the strong afternoon sun.

The site is largely a flat area with a low point occurring at the southeast corner. The surrounding area has been ever so slightly graded to allow water to

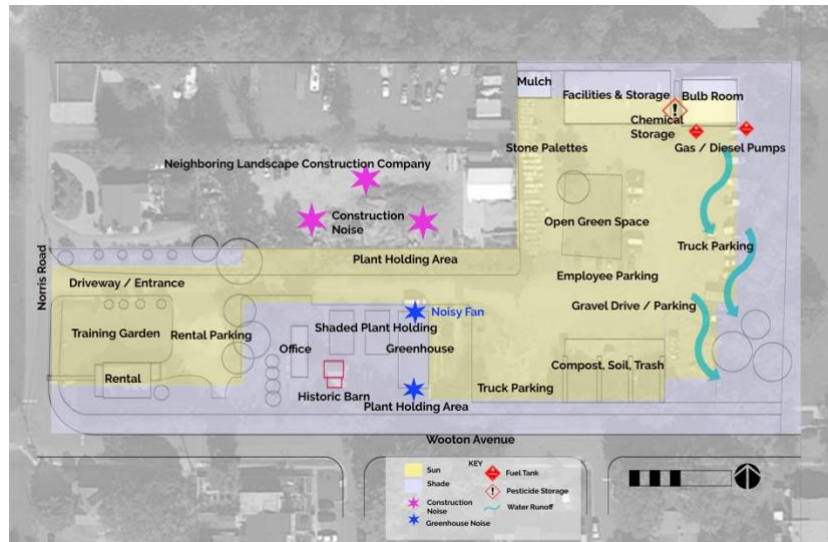


Figure 30 Map diagramming environmental qualities of the site.

Source: Image produced by author

drain to this particular corner. The corner has a storm drain; however the drain is clogged and the corner tends to fill with standing water, particularly in the winter months. The water picks up trash and oil from the fuel pumps, accumulating in the corner.

Chemical storage (such as pesticides and fertilizers) can pose threats to human health if not properly stored or administered on the site. Fuel pumps also pose environmental problems and health risks if not addressed properly.

6.4 Social Mapping

The Yard is not only a productive space, but a social space (fig 31). Crew members gather at the Yard each morning to prepare for their workday ahead of

them. They change into their uniforms and load up their trucks with the supplies they need for the day. They meet with their supervisors to receive the day's instructions and have team meetings.



Figure 31 Map diagramming the social patterns of the crew members.

Source: Image produced by author

The crew

members gather again in the late afternoons as they unpack their trucks and wait for their carpool members to arrive. They often change from their uniforms to their street clothes and take time to clean themselves up before driving home. They'll sit with their friends on old furniture around the site and chat, or they'll start a pick-up game of soccer. Some crew members even use their spare time at the end of the day to do their own gardening, even after they've spent an entire workday working in others' gardens. They'll retrieve plants from the trash pile and replant them in makeshift garden beds around the Yard. Sometimes they'll bring in their own vegetable and flower seeds and plant them around the Yard.

Figure 31 depicts the social patterns of the crew members. The zones highlighted by pink circles are high activity zones: these are mostly productive areas where the crew members spend a lot of time prepping for their work sites in the mornings.

The crew members' main gathering spot is directly in front of the barn near the lawn area, where they socialize at the end of the day. The crew members' personal garden areas are on the fringes of the Yard: behind the barn, near the stormwater corner, or intermixed around the greenhouse. They are situated as if the crew members are trying to hide their garden areas or don't want them to be in the way.

The training garden around the rental house near the Yard's entrance is a low activity zone: it is used only once a week. Unfortunately it has not been integrated well into the company's protocols and is far enough away from the active areas of the yard for it to be easily accessible.

6.5 Circulation

The circulation in and around the site is a crucial piece of information to study. The easier the site is to access, and all of the facilities within it, the more efficient the crew members can be, and their jobs are made just that much easier.



Figure 32 Crew members turn onto Norris Road via Route 107 or Wootton Ave.

Source: Image produced by author

The Yard's current western entrance is located on Norris Road and the site borders residential Wootton Avenue. The crew members access the yard Yard primarily via State Route 107, which is the main route connecting the Yard to the downtown office and surrounding job sites (fig 32). The crew members also access Norris Road via Wootton Avenue on a regular basis. Wootton Avenue connects back to Route 107 after a short distance.

Relocating the entrance to the Yard from Norris Road to Wootton Avenue would provide direct access to the productive areas of the Yard. It would reduce the need for such a long and inefficient driveway and likely reduce the speed of vehicle traffic entering and exiting the site, increasing safety.

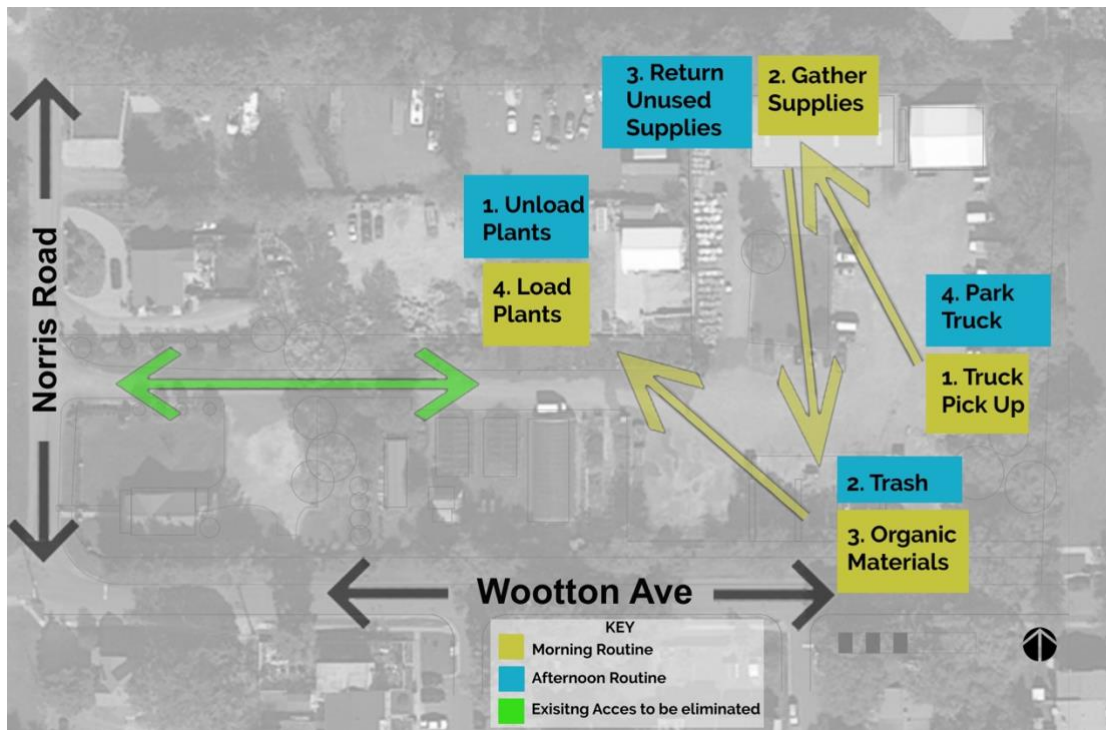


Figure 33 Crew members currently zig-zag through the site as they load and unload their trucks for the day. Source: Image produced by author

The organization of the Yard as it is currently arranged is a bit scattered (fig 33). Upon entering the Yard in the morning, crew members must drive their trucks all

over the Yard to load up with the variety of tools and materials they will need for the day. The process is somewhat similar upon returning in the afternoon when the crew members unload their trucks at the end of the workday. The Yard could benefit from an organized arrangement of materials, supplies, facilities, and plants.

Chapter 7: Proposed Program

The proposed program began to take form with input from the co-design activity. The crew members gave honest and direct feedback about their workplace and what improvements they would like to see.

7.1 Compost Area

The crew members specifically requested a roof to cover all soft materials to protect them from rain and lights to make the area safer. When it rains, the organic materials absorb water, making it harder to load up the trucks. The crew members often work at dawn and dusk, and having lights around the yard improves worker safety and satisfaction.

7.2 Safety and Environmental Concerns

The crew members agreed that the water pooling in the southeast corner of the Yard posed an environmental threat. That corner accumulated oil runoff from the fuel pumps and other litter and debris. The storm drain needs to be unclogged and the entire site needs to be cleaned up. The area could benefit from stormwater interventions. Additionally, interventions should be made to address the safety of the fuel pumps in accordance with OSHA guidelines.

7.3 The Barn and the Lawn

The crew members emphasized the importance of the Barn and lawn to them. These are their primary gathering and socializing areas. The Barn is where the crew members have access to bathrooms and locker rooms as they begin and end their work days. Here, they can make a cup of coffee and socialize with their colleagues as their crews assemble, waiting for daily assignments. The lawn serves for their pick-up soccer games after work and a chance to socialize as they wait for their carpools to assemble at the end of the day. The social function of these areas needs to be preserved to support the well-being of the crew members.

7.4 Training Garden

The crew members suggested the addition of more plants - particularly perennials - to the training garden so that they could enhance their plant identification skills and learn to care for a wider range of plants properly. The members requested plant identification tags to support them in learning this new information.

The crew members also asked for more participation and collaboration with the designers at the office. They explained that their hope was that if they collaborated more with the designers during training workshops, they would all be able to communicate more effectively and reduce the amount of yelling.

Seeing as the existing training garden is near the Yard's entrance, the crew members also acknowledged out the speeding associated with the long driveway into the Yard, which results in dust and gravel being thrown up.

Chapter 8: Program Analysis

8.1 SWOT Analysis

All the information collected from the research methods and site analysis was synthesized and summarized to further clarify the design program, highlight focus areas in the design process, and address the crew members and their needs in the best way possible (fig 34). According to the analysis, the yard had a lot of potential a lot of opportunities for change.



Figure 34 A SWOT analysis synthesizes all input gathered from research methods and site inventory.

Source: Illustration by author

The information gathered from the crew members during the walkthrough was rich and meaningful. Such conclusions could not have been reached without the crew members' participation.

8.2 Principles and Goals

Principles

1. Build a place that allows for **personal expression**, making the experience of the worker **visible**.
2. Develop a place where **physical needs** are met: cleanliness, food, safety...
3. Site should enable **community** and **connection** for crew members through site layout and amenities.
4. Foster **relationships with all staff**, including designers, and use the site as a place to come together as one team.
5. Site should encourage **professional development** through available resources.
6. Give back: protect the **surrounding environment** and serve the **local community**.

Goals

1. Create a space where crew members feel **respected and valued**
2. Create a workplace that crew members **feel proud** of
3. Consider **circulation** and access for vehicles and human traffic
4. Enhance **safety** measures
5. Foster community and a sense of **belonging**
6. Support **knowledge**, horticultural curiosity
7. Address **environmental** concerns, particularly the storm water and pollutants

Figure 35 Principles and goals were developed from the SWOT analysis and reflect the needs of the crew members based on their participation.

Source: Illustration by Author

The following principles and goals (fig 35) were developed from the SWOT analysis. These principles and goals clarify the intent of the design response to reflect everything the crew members said during the photovoice, vignettes, and participatory walkthrough.

The primary focus is the value of the crew members, their physical needs and safety, their need for community, their professional development, and addressing environmental concerns.

Chapter 9: Design

9.1 Design Process

The design process started conceptual diagrams (fig 36) of the site to think about layout and efficiency. I carefully considered circulation around the site and evaluated different access points to the Yard.

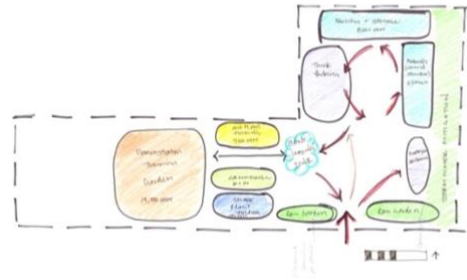


Figure 36 An example of a bubble diagram studying new circulation and layout patterns.

Source: Illustration by author

After determining a good circulation pattern, I divided the site into three zones: a semi-private zone, an empowerment zone, and a production zone (fig 37). The rental house would become a semi-private

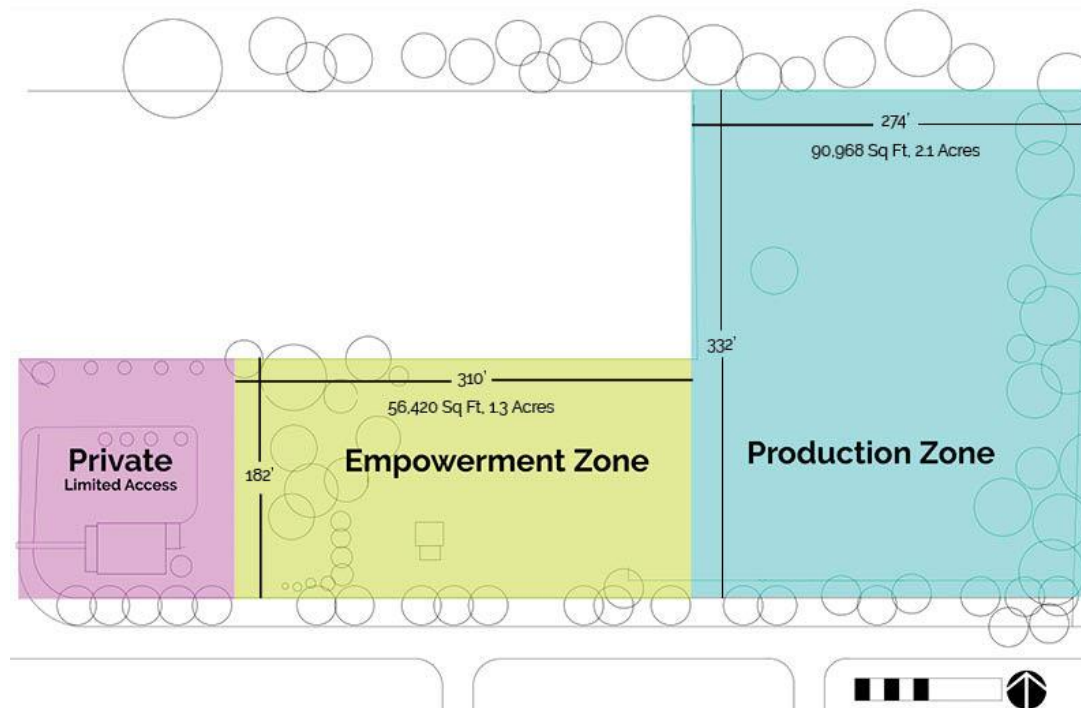


Figure 37 A diagram showing the separation of the site into three distinct zones.

Source: Illustration by author

zone, to allow for the tenants' privacy. The distinction of an empowerment zone contributes to the crew members' well-being and professional development. Finally, a production zone is needed, to lay out the site and address safety concerns efficiently.

9.2 Design Proposal

In the final design proposal (fig 38), the site entrance has been relocated to from Norris Road to Wootton Avenue to directly access the production zone and aid in a more efficient layout. The production zone includes all the facilities and materials storage required for the site. Plenty of parking is available to accommodate all company trucks, large vehicles, and employee cars.

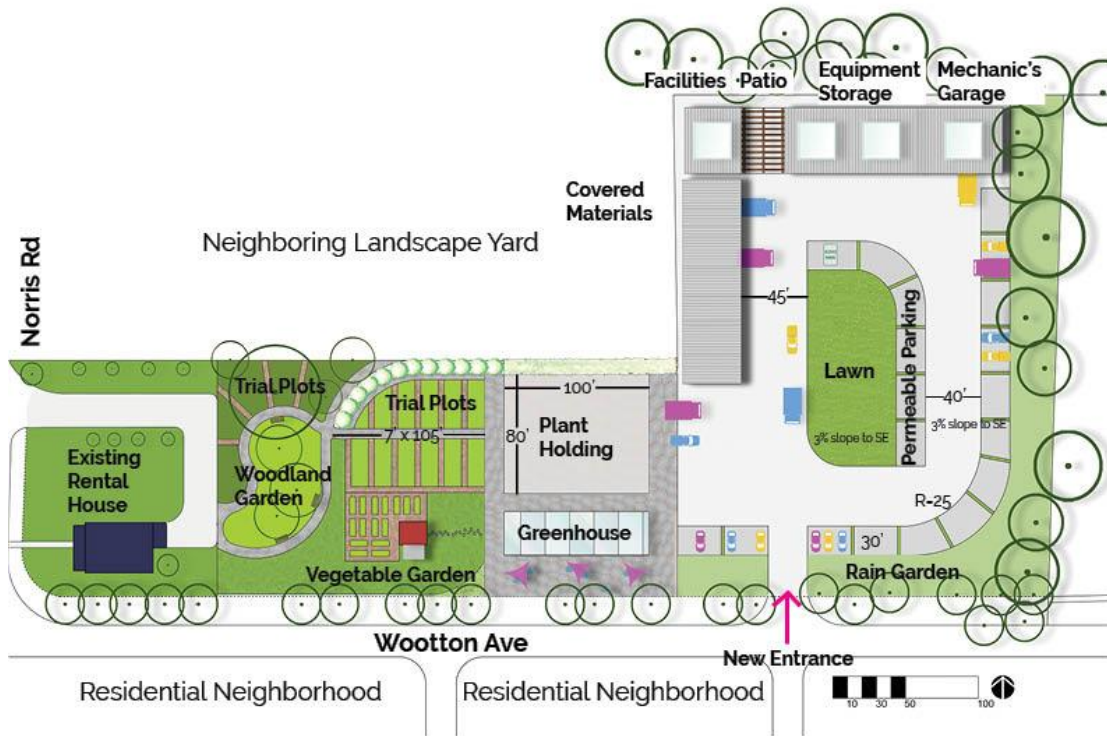


Figure 68 Proposed redesign of the Yard. Calculated for the productive use of the site, this site also empowers the crew members who work there.

Source: Illustration by author

The empowerment zone includes ample trial plots for the crew members' education while maintaining enough space to store plants for upcoming installation jobs. Signage to properly label and identify plant species integrates the plant-holding areas into the training program.

The rental house is now only accessible to the rental tenants via a driveway on Norris Road. The crew members can still access the garden surrounding the house via a gate in the empowerment zone so that they can continue caring for the garden, incorporating it into the company's training program.

The redesign of the site has been carefully calculated to be productive and to accommodate the various vehicles, storage space needed, and site facilities. However, the following breakdown will explain this site in terms of the dignity and empowerment of the landscape crew members.

9.3 Giving Form to a Sense of Knowledge

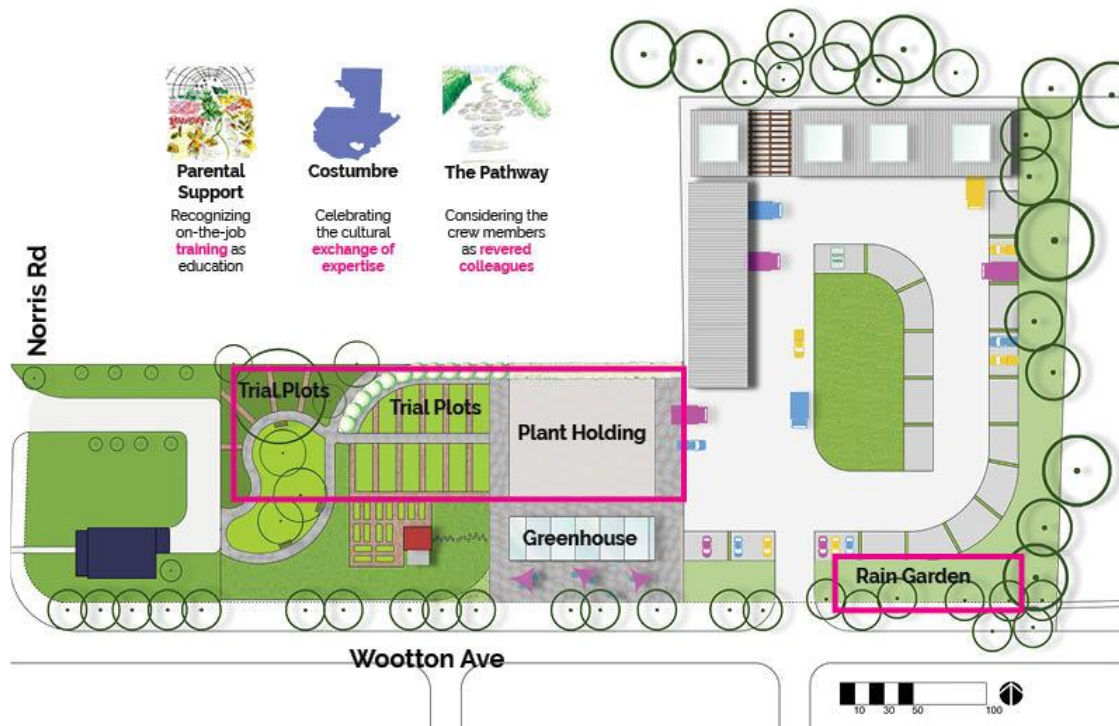


Figure 39 The proposed redesign empowers crew members through educational opportunities.

Source: Illustration by author

The newly designed Yard will empower the crew members regarding their hands-on training and education (fig 39).

There are plenty of trial plots (fig 40) to accommodate a variety of plant types and planting conditions, adequate signage, and a rain garden to demonstrate environmental stewardship.

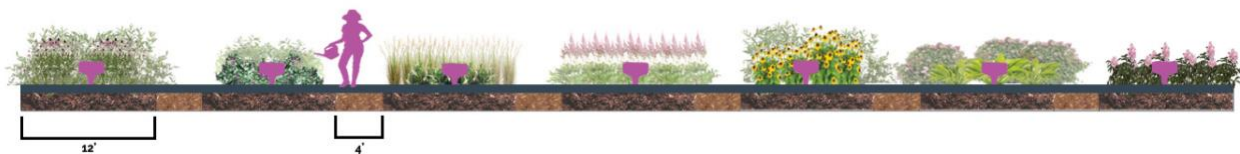


Figure 70 A trial garden allows for the crew members to learn more about the plants they are taking care of through study and observation.

Source: Illustration by author

The trial plots give ample space to study different plant species and environmental stressors. It is a place where crew members can plant various plants to learn their proper identification and care. It can also be a place to compare and contrast different care methods and environmental stressors to understand the care of these plants on a deeper level. For example, crew members could test different fertilizer applications on the same plants across different test plots. They could compare and contrast the effects of the fertilizers and learn which methods of application or which fertilizers are best used. They could also prune different shrubs at different times of the year to learn what timing works best. The combinations for learning different methods of care are endless, and the company can be easily alter them to its needs at any given time.

The rain garden (fig 41) will be a tool to support environmental education and stewardship. It will mitigate the current stormwater challenges and help clean the

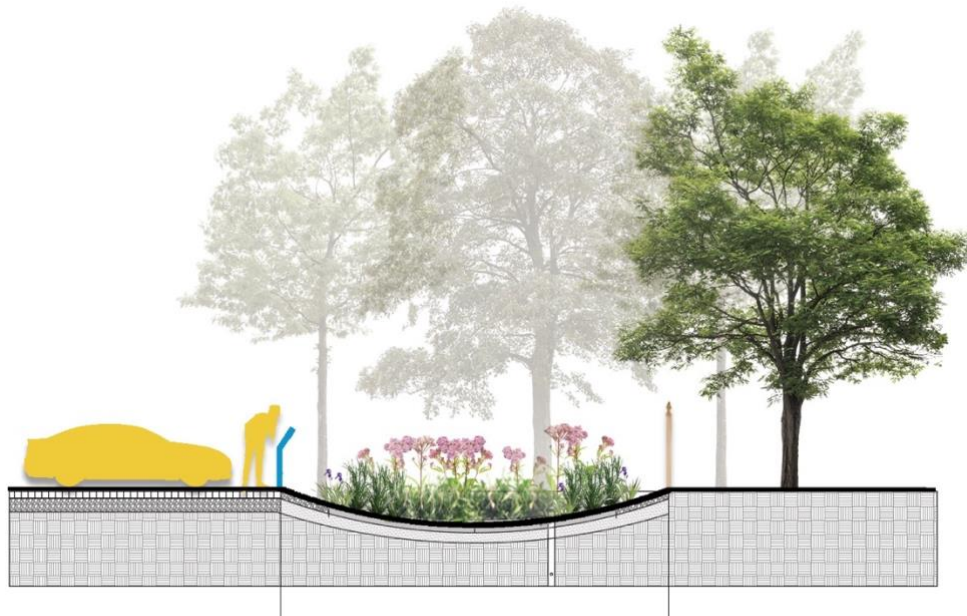


Figure 41 A rain garden will intercept the storm water currently accumulating on the site as well as educate crew members about environmental stewardship.

Source: Illustration by author

water before releasing it back into the system. I anticipate this space being incorporated into the company's training workshops.

9.4 Giving Form to a Sense of Respect

The Yard is now designed to support the crew members and show respect for them, recognizing all that they do. This is demonstrated through the layout, facilities, seating areas, and parking accommodations (fig 42).

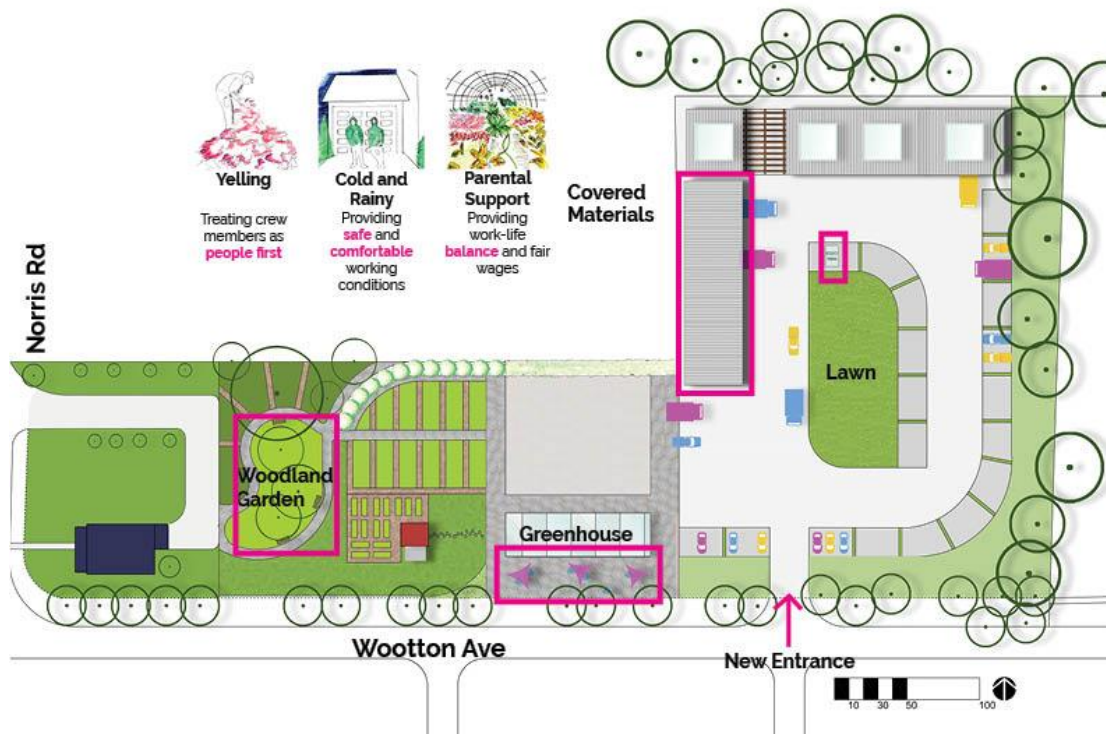


Figure 42 The proposed redesign will empower crew members by recognizing their needs as human beings.

Source: Illustration by author

The entrance previously located on Norris Ave at the west side of the Yard has been moved to the south side of the Yard, on Wootton Avenue. This aligns the entrance with Yard's production zone and eliminates the long driveway, reducing the incentive to speed and thereby increasing safety.

Each of the building structures on this site, such as the materials storage, has a covered overhang (fig 43). This is to keep crew members protected in various weather conditions while they gather supplies - whether that is staying dry in the rain or shaded from the sun.

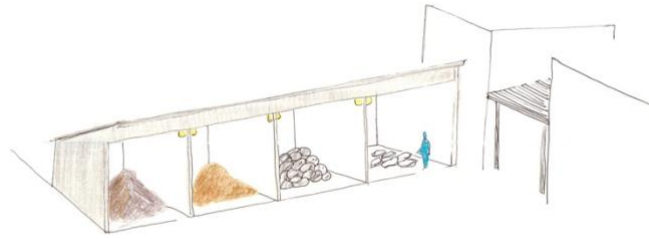


Figure 43 New materials storage includes a covered roof and plenty of lighting as requested by the crew members.

Source: Illustration by author

The design proposal includes several areas for seating and rest, such as a seated area near the greenhouse (fig 44). The greenhouse worker could use this area to take lunch or catch up on paperwork.

Another area designed for respect is the woodland path in the empowerment zone. With the Yard now organized more efficiently, there is room for "extra" amenities. The wooded path integrates into the trial plots as a way to showcase shade-

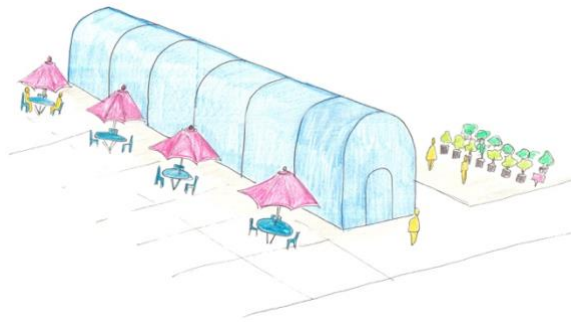


Figure 44 Seating areas, such as this one by the greenhouse show respect for crew members by providing them with comfortable areas for rest.

Source: Illustration by author

loving plants with appropriate plant labels. The crew members can use this space for reflection, meditation, and relaxation. Benches along the path offer a place to sit and rest if needed.

By placing multiple seating areas around the site, crew members to

take a moment to sit and rest if they need to while at the Yard. They can take a moment to meditate before their work day begins or decompress at the end of a long

day. Having these spaces integrated into the Yard sends cues to the crew members that they are valued.

Lastly, some parking near the facilities' entrance is reserved for certain circumstances. The use of this parking isn't explicitly specified, but it could be used to recognize an employee of the month, support employees who may have health challenges, or acknowledge employees who have seniority and have been loyal to the company for many years. This gesture may be small, but it does demonstrate respect for the crew members.

9.5 Giving Form to a Sense of Belonging

The newly redesigned Yard fosters a sense of belonging and community building for the crew members by including an intentional seating area near the main facilities, a reimagined lawn area, and personal vegetable garden plots (fig 45).

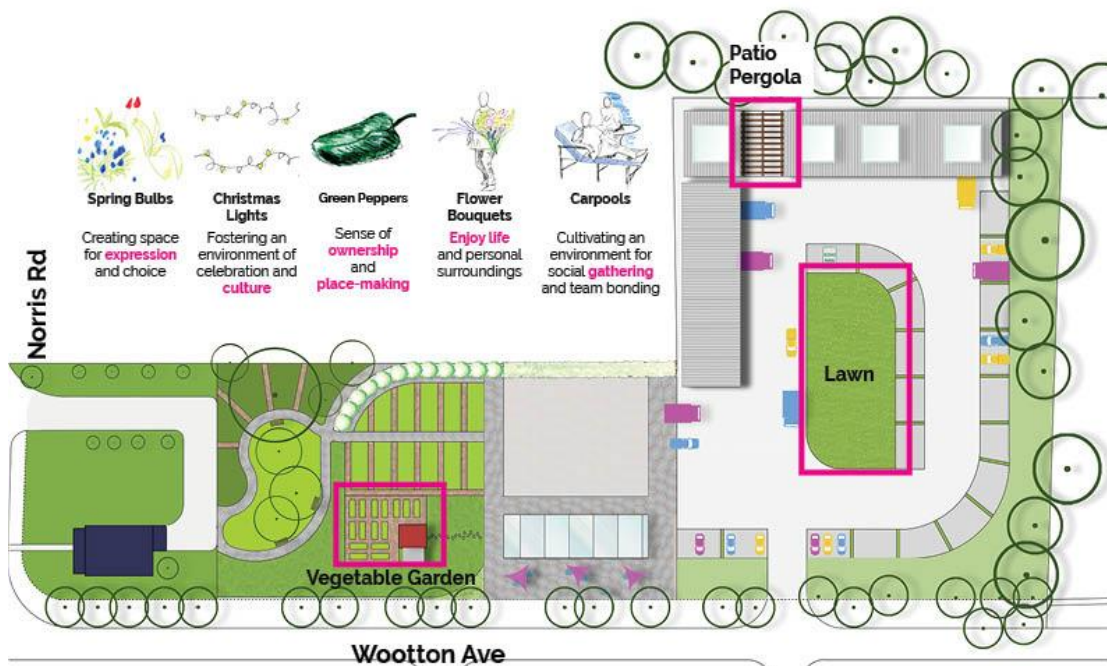


Figure 45 The proposed redesign will empower crew members by fostering a sense of community.

Source: Illustration by author

The covered patio between the facilities structures (fig 47) is a place where crew members can gather at the end of the workday as they wait for their carpools. There are some planters designated for the crew members to plant them as they wish. The space even includes a grill for their cookouts when they spend a full day in the Yard.

A sense of belonging is created by adding a designated garden space (fig 46) for the crew members. The vignettes and the site analysis revealed that the crew members enjoyed planting their own vegetables and flowers, and many of them do not have their own garden space at home. Previously, makeshift vegetable and flower gardens were tucked away in shady corners on the fringes; here, they are out in the open and purposely centered around the old historic barn, which can be converted into a tool shed. This signals to the crew



Figure 46 A community garden will allow crew members who don't have their own garden space at home to garden at the Yard.

Source: Illustration by author



Figure 47 A covered patio provides a place for connection.

Source: Illustration by author



Figure 48 Crew members will still be able to play pick up games of soccer with the modified lawn at the Yard.

Source: Illustration by author

members that they belong and that they can have a sense of ownership and agency here at the Yard.

Finally, an expanded lawn area for the crew members to continue to play their pick-up games of soccer (fig 48) at the end of the day helps them to feel included and at home at the Yard.

9.6 New Daily Routine

After all the proposed changes and redesign of the Yard, crew members' new daily routine will look different. Before, the materials and storage facilities were a bit scattered (fig 49). Crew members had to maneuver their trucks all over the yard in order to load and unload their supplies. Now, the materials and facilities are organized in a meaningful order (fig 50). The crew members start their day by picking up their trucks, loading their supplies and plants, and can easily leave the yard.



Figure 49 The former circulation pattern on site, where crew members traveled in a zig-zag pattern to load/unload the trucks each day.

Source: Illustration by author

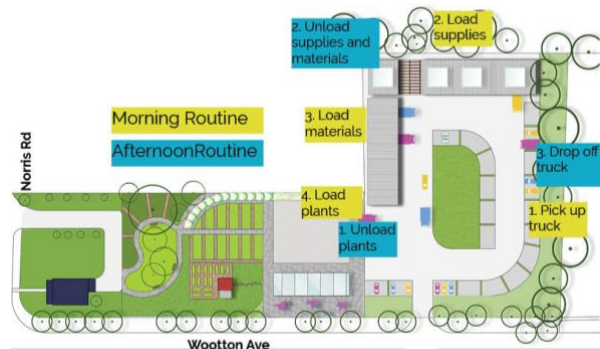


Figure 50 The new circulation pattern aims to simplify the crew members' daily routine by arranging supplies in an orderly arrangement.

Source: Illustration by author

Chapter 10: Reflections

10.1 Lessons Learned

To rephrase the guiding research question: What is the definition of dignity as it pertains to landscape labor? The foundation of dignity, as it pertains to landscape labor boils down to knowledge, respect, and belonging (fig 51).

What is the **definition of dignity** as it pertains to landscape labor?



Knowledge



Respect



Belonging

How can we use this definition to **empower** those who work in landscape labor in their workplace?

- Create a work environment where crew members feel **respected and valued**.
- Prioritize the **safety** and well-being of landscape workers.
- Foster work-place **relationships** and a sense of **belonging**.
- Support **knowledge**, horticultural curiosity, recognize that on-the-job training is education.

Figure 51 The above composition describes the definition of dignity for landscape labor based on conclusions from the research.

Source: Illustration by author

10.2 Limitations

This project, despite its good intentions, was in some ways incomplete and included some limitations such as language barrier, participation, and scope of work.

The first limitation of this project was the language barrier. I speak limited Spanish and many of the crew members speak very limited English, or none at all. We both tried our best to communicate and often spoke a broken mix of both Spanish

and English. I've been communicating with the crew members like this for years, and we've mostly developed a good communication pattern.

However, in terms of research, I recognize that you want to make sure you are exactly sure what a person is saying so as not to misinterpret them. I would have gotten a much richer dialog and more participation had I been fluent in Spanish. The co-design walkthrough was an incredibly rich activity with plenty of dialog because the crew leaders' supervisor, who is completely fluent in both Spanish and English, was available for translation.

Regarding participation, some crew members did not feel comfortable participating at all, likely for fear of retaliation from the company owner. This highlights the fragility of these workers and confirms the literature.

Those who participated the most were crew members I have known for three - six years, and there was a level of established trust there.

Lastly, this project focused on just one company, and it was limited to a design/build/maintenance company. This divide between design work and labor work extends far beyond the design/build/ and maintenance companies; in fact, it is probably easier to address in a design/build firm than it is in a traditional landscape architecture office.

Even though this project will not solve any of the real labor issues out there, it is a topic that I am passionate about and want to continue advocating for in my career.

10.3 Next Steps

Regarding potential next steps for this project, I did not have time to refine the co-design process any further. That said, I would like to continue the co-design process by presenting this design proposal to the crew members and gain additional feedback from them and further refine the site plan. I want them to know that this was not all in vain, that I took their comments and participation seriously, and that I am trying to put it into practice.

I would like to find a way to share these findings and proposed changes to the company owner in a way that protects the crew members and the vulnerable information that they shared. The company owner may not want to take my suggestions, but he should understand that the crew members deserve better treatment and respect.

In the future, it may be worth investigating the SITES requirements and learning how dignity can be incorporated there. This may help bridge the wider gap between the landscape architecture profession and the landscape labor profession. Specifying dignity in construction documents or advocating for labor awareness in the LAAB accreditation standards may also be future next steps.

10.4 Personal Reflection

I have worked at this company for six years and have spent those six years working closely with landscape crew members. Some of the crew members represented in my research, particularly the vignettes, are people I have known those

entire six years. They are my friends and colleagues first and research participants second.

I began my job having a strong theoretical knowledge of my field but very little practical knowledge. While on job sites, I would ask the crew members questions about installation or maintenance. I would often ask them their opinions on a certain planting job I was doing: did they like it? Would they change it?



Figure 52 Author planting annuals on a job site.

Source: Author

The crew members were happy to answer my questions and voluntarily offered suggestions. They were pleased that I showed an interest in their work and consulted with them, and they were happy to help me learn.

Planting - or any other manual labor - was not a part of my job description. However, I often joined the crew members with light planting tasks (fig 52) and, therefore, began to develop a unique sense of trust with them. It began to bridge this divide of "us" vs. "them." I always left the jobsite in a better mood, less stressed about the project I was working on, and always more optimistic about the project's outcome. The crew members have taught me so much invaluable information over the years. I

have felt very supported by them, and I want to honor them. We will never be able to separate design work from labor work; they are too closely intertwined.

Appendix A

Gardens are places of beauty, production, and respite from the outside world. But Terremoto believes they are also mirrors of our wider society, reflecting the complex social, ecological and economic forces that shape our past, present and future. In that way, gardenmaking is an inherently political act and a reflection of our individual and collective priorities and values.

And that gives us hope, because acting locally and doing what is within our control has always been one of the most impactful tools for change. And we see gardenmaking as one of the most beautiful expressions of that. We see the process of working together on your project as an opportunity to come together to grapple with and find creative solutions that take our wider context into consideration.

So we wanted to give you a heads up on some of the areas we're thinking about these days that might (ok, will) show up on projects and that we sincerely hope you're up to engage and collaborate with us on.

The process will be both messy and beautiful, and we will make mistakes along the way. But that's totally ok. Because trying is always better than not trying.

CLIMATE CHANGE + ECOLOGY

California has seen ongoing extreme droughts with no end in sight. As caretakers of landscapes in this state, we are committed to balancing the comfort of the gardens we design with the realities of our climate crisis and the need to be selective of where and how we irrigate our gardens. And to explore how to limit our negative externalities, creating gardens that are fair and just in their physical creation, and generous and kind in their ongoing ecological existence.

What this might look like as we work together

- Rethinking hardscape projects in consideration of their carbon footprint, reusing materials on site as much as possible.
- Considering ways to create less human-supremacist garden spaces that welcome rather than reject birds, bees, and other animals.
- Prioritizing native and drought-tolerant plants wherever possible.

LAND + LABOR

Landscape architecture has a labor acknowledgment problem. While we, as landscape architects and designers, may receive nearly all of the attention and accolades for our work, the majority of that work—on the West Coast at least—is built and maintained by the manual labor of low-wage immigrant workers, many of whom are undocumented. What we design and how we then care for our gardens is intrinsically tied to the people who put in the physical work to realize these projects.

What this might look like as we work together

- Slightly uncomfortable but necessary conversations about appropriate wages and compensation both for landscape crews and and gardeners.
- Finding ways to reject the 'race to the bottom' pricing mentality that pervades the landscape and construction industries, understanding that when we devalue the work of landscape crews we're also devaluing both their work and the land itself.
- Conversations and planning during the design process about what ongoing garden care should look like.

COMMUNITY, CONTEXT + HISTORY

While we might be the current stewards of our homes and property, these pieces of land have deep history and are situated within a wider social and cultural context. And we want to consider ways to make private property feel a little more generous and communal.

What this might look like as we work together

- Discussions about what more community-oriented private gardens could look like - whether it's opening up to tours and events or making surplus produce and edible and medicinal plants available to others.
- Designing with deep consideration and reverence for the indigenous and native communities who occupied this land before us through truth (in the form of land acknowledgement) and reconciliation (financial support for indigenous land trusts).

Appendix B



01
May 24, 2023
Prompt: What is something you like about working in gardens?
Response: "Beautiful flowers... nice house."



02
June 5, 2023
Prompt: What about this work makes you feel proud?



03
June 5, 2023
Prompt: What about this work makes you feel proud?



04
June 5, 2023
Prompt: What about this work makes you feel proud?



05
June 5, 2023
Prompt: What about this work makes you feel proud?



06
June 5, 2023
Prompt: What about this work makes you feel proud?



07
June 5, 2023
Prompt: What about this work makes you feel proud?



08
June 5, 2023
Prompt: What about this work makes you feel proud?



09
June 5, 2023
Prompt: What about this work makes you feel proud?



10
June 5, 2023
Prompt: What about this work makes you feel proud?

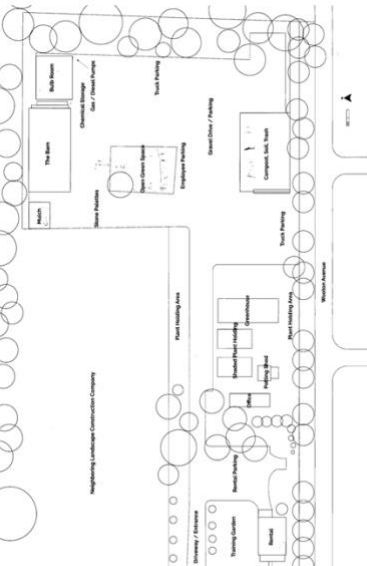
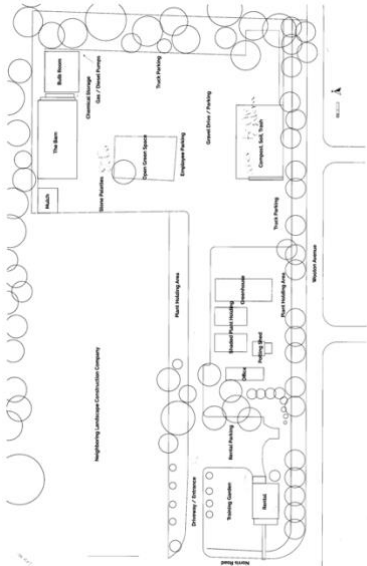
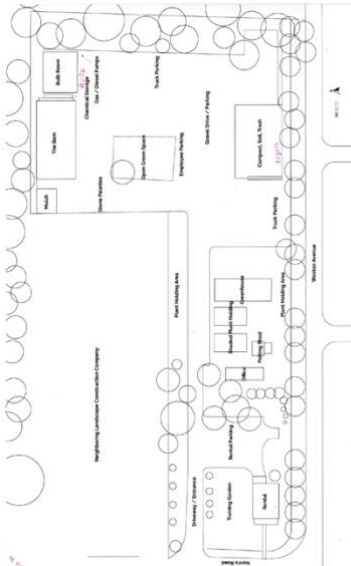
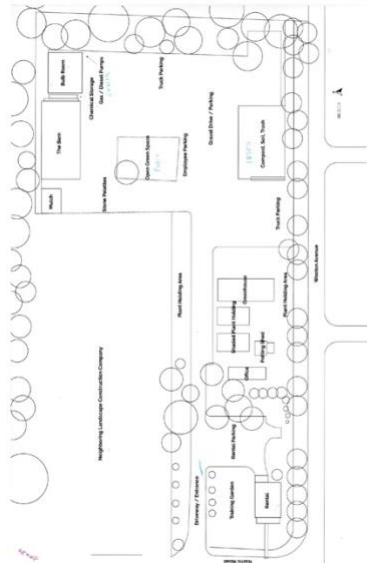
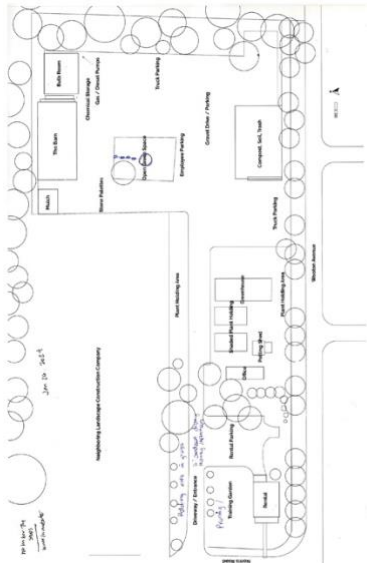
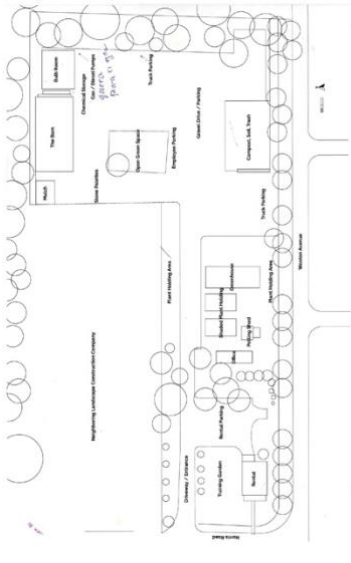


11
June 26, 2023
Prompt: What do you like about your job?



12
June 26, 2023
Prompt: What do you like

Appendix C



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